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RUMICEA/JICCENT MACDILL AFB FL
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SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/01/2019
TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [ET](#) [ER](#)
SUBJECT: ADI QUALA BORDER AREA LARGELY DEMILITARIZED

REF: ADDIS 2770

Classified By: CDA Melinda Tabler-Stone for reason 1.4(c)

¶1. (SBU) The border area near Adi Quala, 60 miles south of Asmara and just 15 miles north of Ethiopia is largely demilitarized, according to a young Eritrean who recently visited the area. Residents of the area freely pass between Eritrea and Ethiopia, he continued, either to follow livestock or for trade. The source said Eritrean soldiers in trenches have been replaced by roving border patrols comprising proxy forces, including fighters from the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Similarly, he claimed, Ethiopian troops have been swapped for Eritrean rebel fighters. He had no information about other parts of the Eritrea-Ethiopia border. He emphasized, however, that although the border is monitored only by roving patrols, getting close to the area required stopping at numerous checkpoints and providing a detailed explanation of why he was there.

¶2. (C) COMMENT: Since UNMEE's final departure in February 2009 news of border conditions has been rare. Such significant demilitarization of the border, if widespread, may account for the increase in Eritreans successfully escaping to Ethiopia (reftel). If the situation near Adi Quala reflects the conditions along the border, the regime could not believe war with Ethiopia is a threat and belies its reasons for keeping the country on a war footing.
Tabler-Stone